

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 A.M., E.D.T., JULY 6, 1976

(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: July 6, 1976

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Forwarded to:

Honorable John L. McLucas  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-76-90

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On June 12, 1976, one of three air conditioning compartment access doors of an American Airlines DC-10, N102AA, separated shortly after the plane took off from Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport en route to San Francisco International Airport. The door struck and damaged two leading edge devices outboard of the No. 1 engine and slightly damaged the fuselage. The aircraft dumped fuel, returned to Detroit, and landed.

This is the third time that an air conditioning compartment access door on a DC-10 aircraft has separated in flight. Following the first incident, McDonnell Douglas issued All Operators Letter (AOL) 10-478, which recommended that the door hinges be checked and rerigged to relieve preloading of the door's upper edge upon closure. McDonnell Douglas subsequently issued AOL 10-638, which recommended that the door latches be checked and rerigged and that the handles be checked for proper loads. These AOL's were later followed by two McDonnell Douglas Service Bulletins, 52-116 and 52-122, which called for, in part, modifications to the door handle assembly and installation of shims on the latch brackets to minimize improper latch rigging. The provisions of the AOL's had not been incorporated on N102AA, although Service Bulletin 52-122 had, in part, been incorporated. The National Transportation Safety Board has also found instances of door latching problems on other DC-10's, on which neither the provisions of the AOL's nor of the Service Bulletins had been incorporated.

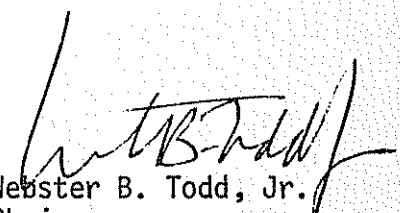
Although the damage inflicted to the airframe was not substantial in any of the previously mentioned cases, the Safety Board is concerned, not only because of the attendant hazard to personnel on the ground, but also because the last incident demonstrated that the door could be ingested into an engine inlet.

The Safety Board realizes that most U.S. carriers have incorporated, at least in part, the provisions of the McDonnell Douglas AOL's and the Service Bulletins, and that some of those operators which have not done so are currently reviewing these measures. However, in view of the influence of Federal Aviation Administration Airworthiness Directives (AD) in effecting worldwide corrective action, the Safety Board believes that an AD action is justified to correct the door problem.

Therefore, in order to prevent further in-flight separations of air conditioning compartment access doors, with the attendant hazards of ground personnel injury and of serious damage to an engine resulting from the engine's ingestion of the door, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Examine the guidance provided in the McDonnell Douglas "All Operators Letters" and "Service Bulletins" pertaining to the DC-10 air conditioning compartment access doors, and consolidate their pertinent provisions into an Airworthiness Directive. The AD should, in addition, require a one-time inspection of the rigging of these doors. (Class I--Urgent Followup.) (A-76-90)

TODD, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

  
By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.  
Chairman

THIS RECOMMENDATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.